DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 712 EA 001 918

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The Public Image of the School Board Role.

Wisconsin Univ., Madison.
Spons Agency-Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
Report No-CRP-2371
Pub Date 17 Feb 66
Note-14p.; Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, Illinois, February 17, 1966).
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80
Descriptors-*Board of Education Role, Citizens Councils, *Community Attitudes, Financial Support, Motivation, Organization, Performance, Power Structure, *Public Opinion, Qualifications, *School Districts, Status
Identifiers-Wisconsin

To assess the public image of the school board role, 1,794 randomly selected citizens in 12 Wisconsin school districts were interviewed concerning their perceptions of the school board and expectations for its operation. Questions covered (1) the relative importance of the school board role, (2) motivation for seeking the office, (3) expected qualifications for school board members, (4) accomplishments and shortcomings of the board, (5) operating procedures of the board, (6) school board response to pressure groups, (7) public involvement in school policy making, and (8) fiscal responsibility of the board. Results show that the public's image of the school board role is quite respectable, with school boards being viewed as important bodies which are fiscally responsible and whose members are altruistically motivated. In general, boards are felt to function openly and to be resistant to external pressures. Citizens were found to be rather naive in some respects and poorly informed in others. Expectations for several aspects of the school board role exhibit considerable variation from one school district to another, pointing out the need for additional study of the underlying social, economic, and demographic variables which influence response patterns. (TT)

ED026712

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AERA
Chicago, Illinois
February 17, 1966

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE*

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Although investigations of roles in educational organizations are currently the vogue, the role of the school board has been the subject of relatively little systematic study. Those studies of the school board role which have been conducted have generally focused on the internal dimensions of the position. It must be recognized, however, that the board of education is an interstitial body, neither entirely inside nor wholly outside the formal school organization. The board of education mediates the demands of the formal school organization and the demands of the larger society in which the school is embedded, thus occupying a central position in the process of bargaining for resources in a competitive society. It is of considerable importance, therefore, to assess expectations for the school board role held by lay citizens.

In this paper we reported some expectations for the school board role held by citizens in twelve Wisconsin school districts. The data on which the paper is based were gathered for USOE Cooperative Research Project 2371, The School Board As An Agency For Resolving Conflict. The study is one of several which are being conducted in an on-going program of research on administrative organization in education in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin. Project 2371 is concerned with the role of the board of education as an agency for resolving conflict between the formal school organization (professional educators) and the larger community (lay citizens). A central thesis of the study is that the degree of concensus in expectations for the school board role bears a systematic and cogent relationship to (1) change in level of local financial support for the schools, and (2) change in the nature of allocations to categories within the budget.

To obtain data concerning expectations for the school board role held by the public, 1,794 randomly selected citizens in twelve Wisconsin school districts were interviewed by the staff of the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory using a carefully structured interview schedule. In addition to data concerning the school board role, the interview schedule was designed to elicit citizen's expectations for the schools in regard to the task areas -- educational program, staff and pupil personnel, and business and plant management. Intermediate ratings of satisfaction and/or effectiveness for the board of education and the schools were also obtained,

* The research reported herein was supported by the United States Office of Education Cooperative Research Branch, CRP Project 2371. The project is directed by Professor James Lipham; Professor Russell T. Gregg and the author are co-investigators.

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as was data concerning the background of the respondent. In this paper, however, only citizen's perceptions of the school board role and their expectations for the operation of the board of education will be considered. The expectations identified in this paper will be explored in greater depth in the final report of the project and in a number of related doctoral dissertations.

The twelve school districts from which the sample of citizens was drawn were selected from among approximately 100 Wisconsin school districts which provided a K-12 educational program and which had 1,400 or more pupils in average daily membership during the 1963-64 school year. In addition to average daily membership such factors as equalized valuation per pupil in adm, ratio of non-public to public school enrollment, fiscal control (dependent or independent) and extent of controversy within the district were considered in selecting these districts. The twelve school districts ranged from 1,440 to 22,750 pupils in adm; from $17,339 to $43,589 in valuation per pupil in adm; and from zero to .526 in ratio of non-public school to public school enrollment.

That the sample of 1,794 citizens is broadly representative of the adult population of the State of Wisconsin is evident from the data shown in Table 1, where is presented a comparison of the age, education, family income and occupational status of the sample with 1960 census data for Wisconsin. The differences which exist are, for the most part, to be expected.[1] Because of the similarity which exists between the sample and 1960 census data, the researchers feel reasonably confident that the respondents in the sample reflect with considerable accuracy expectations for the school board role held by the adult citizens of the state.

Relative Importance of the School Board Role

Respondents were asked which position they thought was more important; being a member of the school board or being a member of the city (village) council.[2] Responses for the total sample, and for the high and the low district are shown in Table 2. It is of interest that in each of the twelve districts, the percentage of citizens who thought the position of school board member was more important exceeded the percentage of citizens who thought the position of city or village council member was more important. The relative importance ascribed to the school board role varied from district to district. For example, when the response pattern in the district in which citizens ascribed lowest importance to the school board role was compared with that of the district in which citizens ascribed highest importance to this role, using a Chi square test, the difference in the two response patterns was found to be significant at the .001 level.

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[1] Differences in occupational status distributive between the sample and the 1960 census distribution are likely explained by the fact that sampling for the present study was based on household units, not individuals.

[2] "High" and "low" district are arbitrarily defined as the district having the highest percentage of respondents and the district having the lowest percentage of respondents in the first category of the response pattern. No value connotation is implied in the two terms.

Table 1.--Comparison of Age, Education, Family Income, and Occupational Status of the Sample with 1960 Wisconsin Census Data

Age	Sample %	Wisconsin 1960 Census
21-24	6.7	7.2
25-29	10.0	9.6
30-34	9.1	10.3
35-39	10.1	10.5
40-44	11.0	10.0
44-49	10.6	9.9
50-54	9.0	8.9
55-59	9.0	8.1
60-64	6.6	7.1
65 and over	17.9	16.4
Years of School Completed		
8	19	23
12	35	29
16	6	5
Family Income		
Less than 1000	3.1	3.8
1,000-1,999	4.7	6.2
2,000-2,999	6.4	7.4
3,000-3,999	7.5	8.6
4,000-4,999	7.3	11.2
5,000-5,999	11.8	13.8
6,000-6,999	11.4	12.6
7,000-9,999	23.0	22.0
10,000-14,999	13.3	10.3
15,000 and over	6.1	4.1
Not ascertained	5.4	0

Occupational Status*		Male %	Female %	All %
Professional, technical and kindred	12.4	8.8	12.6	10.0
Farmers and farm managers	11.1	10.1	1.4	7.5
Managers, officials and proprietors	14.1	9.1	3.0	7.2
Clerical and kindred	12.5	5.8	28.4	12.9
Sales	4.8	6.2	8.7	7.0
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred	14.0	19.3	1.3	13.7
Operatives and laborers	21.2	32.2	19.0	28.1
Private household and service workers	9.9	4.9	16.0	8.3
Other	-	3.6	9.6	5.3

*Percentages for the occupational status analysis of the sample are based on n=1228 respondents. The remainder of the respondents (566) were not in the labor force for this code.

Table 2.--Question: Which position do you think is more important; being a member of the school board or being a member of the city (village) council?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
School Board	747	41	46	33	91	54
Both the Same	464	26	35	25	29	17
City (Village) Council	374	21	44	31	23	14
Don't Know	209	12	15	11	26	15
Total	1794	100	140	100	169	100

Interviewees were also asked whether they would consider running for membership on the local school board, or would consider running for membership again if they had previously been school board members.[3] Fourteen per cent of those interviewed indicated they would consider running for membership on the local school board; 84 per cent replied they would not consider running for membership. The reasons most frequently cited for not running for the school board were that the respondent considered himself unqualified, was too busy, was too young or too old, or did not have enough education. The reasons most frequently cited by respondents who said they would consider running for the school board were typically altruistic--a belief that he was qualified for the position, an interest in children and their education, and a feeling of civic responsibility.

Motivation For Seeking The Office Of School Board Member

Citizens were asked the following question: "As you see it, what reasons should a person have for wanting to serve on a school board?" Interestingly enough, their responses corresponded closely with the altruistic admonitions found in the literature. Forty-one per cent of the respondents cited motives having to do with the educational program (an interest in education and school problems, to improve the school curriculum, to improve the competence of the teaching staff,etc.); 21 per cent of the respondents gave answers having to do with an interest in the welfare of youth[4], and the welfare of children; 19 per cent of the respondents gave reasons having a community service theme (civic duty, an interest in the betterment of the community, a desire to help produce better citizens). Less than two per cent of the respondents indicated that a person's motive for wanting to serve on a school board should be to keep taxes down, or to see that tax dollars are spent in the most efficient way.

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[3] Of the total sample, 79 persons indicated they had previously served as a school board member. This large number of former school board members probably is due to school district reorganization which has eliminated many small school districts in Wisconsin in recent years.

[4] On a somewhat less altruistic note, 8 per cent of the respondents cited an interest in the welfare of their own children of school age.

Having identified the reasons why they though a person should want to serve on a school board, respondents were then asked whether any of the present members of their school board had other reasons for serving. Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicated they did not know; 31 per cent indicated no, the present members of their school board did not have other reasons for serving; and 8 per cent indicated yes, one or more members of their school board did have other reasons for serving. When asked what these other reasons were, respondents cited reasons related to personal gain, e.g., enhance personal prestige or further political aspirations, most frequently. Other reasons cited were a desire to cut taxes, or to fire the school superintendent or some other member of the district's professional staff.

Respondents were also asked whether they believed members of their local school board should receive a salary. The response pattern for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 3. In each of the twelve districts a majority of the respondents favored paying school board members a salary. However, significant differences in response patterns among districts exist. For example, the difference between the response pattern of the low district and the high district is significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test is applied. The reasons for paying a salary most frequently cited were that board members should be compensated for the time and effort they spend on the job, that a larger number of qualified persons would be encouraged to run for the office if a salary were paid, and that other public officials receive salaries. Those persons who indicated no salary should be paid usually justified their position by stating that service on the board is a civic duty, or that paying a salary would tend to attract poorly qualified candidates interested only in the money.[5]

Table 3.--Question: "Should members of your school board be paid a salary, or not?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1207	68	79	57	126	75
No	435	24	52	37	31	18
Don't Know	152	8	9	6	12	7
Total	1794	100	140	100	169	100

Qualifications for School Board Membership

Respondents were asked three questions relating to qualifications for school board membership; one concerned educational qualifications and two concerned whether board members would represent a particular area or interest in the community. Respondents were asked what educational qualifications they thought school board members should have. The question

[5]General agreement that school board members should be compensated for any out-of-pocket expenses they incur in performing their duties was noted.

was open-ended and elicited considerable variation in response which necessitated some discretion in coding. Thirty-four per cent of the respondents thought that school board members should have a high school education, 14 per cent indicated some college education should be required, and 6 per cent indicated that school board members should be college graduates. Six per cent of the respondents replied they did not know what educational qualifications should be required. The remainder of the respondents were of the opinion that there should be no particular educational requirements required of school board members; that other factors such as business experience, teaching experience, or having children in school were more important.

The admonition that school board members should be elected at large rather than by area is a common one. Each respondent was asked whether he believed a member of the school board should be elected at large with all the people in the district voting on every candidate, or whether each candidate should represent a certain section of the district and be voted on only by the people who live in that section. Response patterns for this question are shown in Table 4 for the total sample and for the high and the low district. Although a majority of the respondents replied that school board members should be elected at large, a substantial number voiced a preference for area representation. The difference in the response pattern between the high and the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied. Inspection of the data indicated that citizens in relatively homogeneous urban school districts tended to prefer election at large and that citizens in districts comprised of both rural and urban territory were more inclined toward area representation, particularly in those districts which recently had been reorganized.

Table 4.--Question: "Should a member of the school board be elected at large where all the people in the district vote on every candidate, or should each candidate run from a certain section of the district and be voted on only by the people who live in that section?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
At Large	947	53	53	35	92	66
Certain Section	697	39	76	51	45	32
Don't Know	150	8	21	14	3	2
Total	1794	100	150	100	140	100

Respondents were also asked whether they thought it a good idea for a member of the school board to serve as a spokesman for a particular group of persons, such as occupational, business or religious groups. Responses to this question for the total sample and for the high and the low districts are shown in Table 5. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the response is the fact that less than half of the respondents indicated it was not a good idea. When the response pattern in the low district was compared with that in the high district using a Chi square test, the difference in response

patterns was significant at the .001 level. Inspection of the data indicated that a higher percentage of citizens in urban school districts believed that it was a good idea for a member of the board to serve as spokesman for a particular group than did citizens in rural areas, or in districts composed of both urban and rural area.

Table 5.--Question: "Do you think it is a good idea, or not, for a member of the school board to serve as a spokesman for a particular group of persons, such as an occupation, business or religious group?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good Idea	494	27	35	22	50	36
Both Good and Bad	189	11	18	11	9	6
Not Good	874	49	97	60	71	51
Don't Know	237	13	12	7	10	7
Total	1794	100	162	100	140	100

Accomplishments and Short-Comings of the Board of Education

Respondents were asked to identify what, if anything, their local school board had done which they thought was exceptionally good and conversely, what, if anything, their school board had done which they thought was exceptionally bad. Responses to these questions are of interest, since they provide some insight into the type of school board activity which attracts public approbation or censure. The two questions were open-ended and the responses were post-coded. The question, "What, if anything, has your school board done which you think was exceptionally good?" elicited a variety of answers. A majority of the respondents, 56 per cent, replied they could not identify anything the board had done which they thought was exceptionally good, and 13 per cent of the respondents replied, "Nothing!" On the positive side, 17 per cent of the respondents indicated their school board's accomplishments in building, enlarging, or improving school facilities were exceptionally good. No other activity was cited by more than 3 per cent of the respondents; the balance of the responses on the positive side made reference to such activities as school district reorganization, pupil services, improved curriculum, and up-grading of the district's professional staff.

In response to the question, "What, if anything, has the school board done which you think was exceptionally bad?", 47 per cent of the respondents replied that they did not know of anything exceptionally bad which the school board had done, and 29 per cent of the respondents replied "Nothing!" Negative responses could be placed into four major categories; buildings, staff, funds, and miscellaneous. Nine per cent of the respondents critized their board's activities in regard to school buildings. A majority of the responses in this category, however, were critical of shortcomings in planning for new schools, for example, failure to include needed facilities such as a swimming pool, or wasting money by attempting to remodel hopelessly antiquated facilities. Only two per cent

of the respondents criticized their board for spending too much money on new school facilities or "building monuments". Five per cent of the respondents criticized their board's activities in regard to the professional staff, citing such specific criticisms as hiring mediocre teachers, failing to maintain good relationships with the teaching staff, and meddling in administrative affairs. Two per cent of the respondents criticized their board's activities in regard to school funds. Perhaps the most startling aspect of the response to this question was the fact that only nine respondents out of 1,794 criticized the school board for spending too much money. Criticisms in the area of school funds were for such things as poor budgeting and for maintaining poor relationships with other governmental units, particularly the city council. Boards of education were also scored for such things as poor public relations practices, being too narrow-minded and conservative, mishandling school district reorganization, failing to keep the curriculum up to date, and providing an unsatisfactory school lunch program.

Operating Procedures of the Board of Education

The interview schedule contained several questions designed to elicit expectations for the way in which the board should conduct its business. Citizens were asked whether they felt it was a good idea for the school board to publish an agenda. The pattern of responses to this question for the total sample and for the high district and the low district are shown in Table 6. An overwhelming majority of the respondents felt that it was a good idea for the school board to let poeple know beforehand the items which would be covered at the next board meeting. Some variation among districts was noted and the difference in the response pattern of the low district and that of the high district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied. In every school district, however, at least three-fourths of the respondents believed that it was a good idea for the board to keep people informed concerning the business to be transacted at board meetings. When the respondents were queried as to whether their local school board does, in fact, do this, 43 per cent of the respondents did not know; 36 per cent answered yes; and 21 per cent answered no.

Table 6.--Question: "In your opinion, is it a good idea -- or not really necessary -- for the school board to let people know beforehand the items which will be covered, at the next board meeting?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good Idea	1486	83	112	75	152	94
Not Necessary	220	12	26	17	5	3
Don't Know	88	5	12	8	5	3
Total	1794	100	150	100	162	100

Citizens were also asked whether they believed their school board should be organized into sub-committees or whether the board should operate as a whole. The pattern of responses to this question for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 7.

Apparently the familiar adage that a school board should operate as a committee as a whole does not impress the average citizen. A majority of the respondents favored sub-committees, although the response patterns varied greatly from district to district. The difference between the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at .001 level when a Chi square test was applied.

Table 7.--Question: "As you see it, should the board be organized into sub-committees with different special concerns -- such as courses of study, building maintenance, and finance -- or should the board as a whole handle this without sub-committees?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sub-committee	947	53	64	43	90	64
Board as a whole	617	34	72	48	34	24
Don't Know	230	13	14	9	17	12
Total	1794	100	150	100	141	100

Three questions concerning the procedure which should be followed in budget preparation were asked. First, respondents were asked whether, in preparing a school budget, the school superintendent should work out a proposed budget first or whether the school board should develop its own proposed budget. Response patterns for this question are shown in Table 8 for the total sample and for the high district and the low district. A surprisingly large number of respondents were of the opinion that the board should develop its own proposed budget. Apparently the conventional wisdom concerning budget preparation found in school administration text books has not penetrated the thinking of the average citizen. Whether such an expectation on the part of citizens is legitimate may be argued, but in six of the twelve districts 30 per cent or more of the respondents said the school board should develop its own proposed budget. Again, the difference between the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied.

Table 8.--Question: "In preparing a school budget, do you think it is better to have the school superintendent work out a proposed budget first, or should the school board develop its own proposed budget?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Superintendent	983	55	65	46	98	70
Depends	137	8	7	5	7	5
Board	510	28	55	39	19	14
Don't Know	164	9	15	10	16	11
Total	1794	100	142	100	140	100

Citizens were also asked whether, in preparing a budget, it is a good idea to ask teachers to recommend items which they think should be included. An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 88 per cent, said this was a good idea; only four per cent said it was not good. Respondents were also asked whether they thought tax payers should be asked to make recommendations about items which should be included in the school budget. Opinion was quite divided on this item, with 55 per cent of the respondents indicating that taxpayers should be asked to make recommendations and 32 per cent of the respondents indicating they should not be asked.

Two questions concerning the school board's role as a pressure group were asked. Respondents were asked whether they believed that their school board should work for greater financial aid from the state. The response pattern for this question for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 9. In each of the twelve districts 51 per cent or more of the respondents stated that their local school board should work to secure greater financial aid from the state. Inspection of the data revealed that citizens in those school districts which had the lowest valuation per pupil were especially anxious for their school board to work for greater state aid. In fact, in the two districts with lowest valuation per pupil, over 80 per cent of the respondents took this position. Conversely, in the district with the highest valuation per pupil, a bare majority of the respondents, 51 per cent, favored having their school board work to secure greater state aid. The difference in the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied.

Table 9.--Question: "In your opinion, should the school board in this district work for greater financial aid to its schools from the Wisconsin state government, or not?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Should	1132	63	72	51	123	82
Depends	109	6	5	4	6	4
Should Not	283	16	41	29	10	7
Don't Know	270	15	22	16	11	7
Total	1794	100	140	100	150	100

Respondents were also asked whether their local school board should work for greater financial aid from the federal government. The response patterns for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 10. There was somewhat less support for the proposition that the local school board should work for greater financial aid from the federal government than for the proposition that greater financial aid should be sought from the state government. Nevertheless, 55 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that their local school board should work for greater federal aid. In only four of the twelve districts did less than 50 per cent of the respondents state that the board should work for increased federal aid, and in no district did less than 40 per cent of the respondents take this position. In only one district did the

respondents who said the board should not work for increased federal aid outnumber those who said the board should work for increased federal aid. Again, inspection of the data indicated that respondents in school districts which had a low valuation per pupil were much more inclined to have their school board work for increased federal aid than were respondents in school districts where valuation per pupil was high. As expected, the difference in the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied.

TABLE 10.--"Should your school board work for greater financial aid to its schools from the federal government, or not?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Should	978	55	57	41	108	72
Depends	129	7	9	6	12	8
Should Not	414	23	61	44	17	11
Don't Know	273	15	13	9	13	9
Total	1794	100	140	100	150	100

Respondents were asked two questions concerning their perception of the way in which their school board reached decisions: 1) Do you think the decisions made at school board meetings usually are "cut and dried"--actually made before the meeting, and 2) Does the school board usually act as a "rubber stamp" for the superintendent of schools -- just approving the things he wants. Concerning whether decisions made at school board meetings are usually cut and dried, 41 per cent of the respondents indicated they did not know, 28 per cent indicated sometimes, 23 per cent indicated almost never, and 8 per cent indicated usually. Concerning whether the school board acts as a rubber stamp for the superintendent, 42 per cent of the respondents indicated they did not know, 33 per cent replied almost never, 21 per cent indicated sometimes, and 4 per cent stated usually. Judging by these responses, the average citizen does not believe that most school district business is transacted in secret sessions, or that most school board decisions are dictated by the superintendent of schools.

School Board Response to Pressure Groups

Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning their school board's reaction to pressure groups. First, they were asked whether it was all right for the school board to decide an issue in a certain way because of pressure from a group of citizens. The pattern of responses to this question is shown in Table 11 for the total sample and for the high and the low district. In general, citizens were of the belief that the board of education should not be influenced by pressure groups when deciding an issue. Although the difference in the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied, response patterns among most of the districts were quite similar.

TABLE 11.--"In your opinion, is it all right for the school board to decide an issue in a certain way because of pressures from a group of citizens who have a special interest in a problem, or should the board never do this?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Right	268	15	14	9	34	23
Depends	369	21	37	25	34	23
Never do this	1006	56	82	55	65	43
No opinion	151	8	16	11	17	11
Total	1794	100	149	100	150	100

Next, each respondent was asked how frequently his local school board had made decisions in a certain way because of pressures brought to bear by special interest groups. Sixty-three per cent of the respondents replied they did not know, 15 per cent replied the board had never done this, 19 per cent replied the board had sometimes done this, and 2 per cent replied that their school board's decisions had often been influenced by pressures brought to bear by special interest groups. Respondents who indicated their school board had bowed to pressures exerted by special interest groups were asked to identify the types of special interest groups which successfully had exerted pressure upon the school board. Parental groups interested in kindergarten, transportation, and similar specific problems were identified by 118 respondents; businessmen and "people with money" were identified by 39 respondents; and taxpayer groups, the P.T.A., religious groups, political groups, and elected officials were each identified by from 10 to 20 respondents.

Public Involvement in School Policy Making

A question which is of considerable concern to school board members and administrators is the extent to which citizen's committees should be utilized. Respondents were asked whether they believed it a good idea for the school board to have citizen's committees to advise it on ways to solve problems facing the schools. The response pattern for this question for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 12. About two-thirds of the respondents thought it a good idea for a school board to have citizen's committees. Response patterns showed considerable variation among districts. The difference between the response pattern of the high district and that of the low district was significant at the .001 level when subjected to a Chi square test. Inspection of the data indicated that a higher percentage of the respondents in urban and suburban school districts thought citizen's committees to be a good idea than was the case in rural districts.

Respondents who replied affirmatively to the question were asked to identify some problem areas where they thought that a citizen's committee would be helpful. Problems related to a school building program, curriculum revision, pupil transportation, public relations, and pupil discipline were mentioned most frequently. Citizens who responded negatively were asked why they believed citizen's committees were not a good idea. Two reasons were mentioned most frequently; namely, that solving school problems is the responsibility of the board of education and that involving too many people in school board decisions will result in confusion and delay.

TABLE 12.--Question: "Do you think it is a good idea, or not, for the school board to have citizen's committees to advise the board on ways to solve problems facing the schools?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1179	66	83	56	125	77
No	359	20	37	25	21	13
No Opinion	256	14	29	19	16	10
Total	1794	100	149	100	162	100

Fiscal Responsibility of the Board of Education

The interview schedule contained two questions testing whether citizen's regard the board of education as a fiscally responsible body, or whether it has a spendthrift image. Respondents were asked whether they felt the pay scale for teachers in their district was too low, about right, or too high. The response pattern for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 13. Clearly, citizens do not feel that teachers are overpaid, and a substantial number were of the opinion that teachers in their school district were underpaid. It is remarkable that in one district not a single respondent felt that the teacher's pay scale was too high and in five other districts less than 2 per cent of the respondents felt that the salary scale was too high. Conversely, in seven of the twelve districts 20 per cent or more of the respondents felt that the teacher's pay scale was too low. The difference between the response pattern found in the high district and that found in the low district was significant at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied.

TABLE 13.--Question: "Do you feel the pay scale for public school teachers in this district is too low, about right, or too high?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Too low	365	20	14	8	54	36
About right	837	47	96	59	48	32
Too high	48	3	11	7	0	0
No opinion	544	30	42	26	48	32
Total	1794	100	163	100	150	100

Respondents were also queried as to whether they thought the amount of money their local school board was spending on the public schools was not enough, about right, or too much. The response pattern for the total sample and for the high and the low district is shown in Table 14. The "high" and "low" districts are the same as those found to be "high" and "low" on the preceding question and again, the difference between the response pattern of the two districts was found to be significant

at the .001 level when a Chi square test was applied. A majority of the respondents were satisfied with their school board's level of expenditure. These data provide little support for the charge that boards of education are fiscally irresponsible. Nearly as many people felt that their school board was spending too little money or expressed the view that their board was spending too much money. Those persons who were dissatisfied with their school board's fiscal policies, either because they were spending too much or too little, constituted less than 17 per cent of the total sample, and in no school district did this group constitute more than 27% of the respondents.

TABLE 14.--Question: "Overall, would you say that the amount of money your school board is spending on the public schools here is not enough, about right, or too much?"

	Total Sample		Low District		High District	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not enough	122	7	4	2	23	15
About right	912	51	95	58	49	33
Too much	181	10	26	16	12	8
Don't know	579	32	38	24	66	44
Total	1794	100	163	100	150	100

In conclusion, it may be observed that the public's image of the school board role is quite respectable, at least among adult citizens in Wisconsin. Generally, the school board is viewed as an important body which is fiscally responsible in its use of public funds and whose members are altruistically motivated (although not all are as pure as the well known soap). The board is generally felt to function in the "Open" and to be quite impartial, i.e., resistant to pressures. One may also observe that citizen's expectations are, in some respects, rather naive, e.g., concerning procedure in budget preparation, and in some areas, poorly informed, e.g., the relatively high percentage of "don't know" or "no opinion" responses to some questions.

It is also well to observe that expectations for specific aspects of the school board exhibit considerable variation from one school district to another. On every question discussed herein, significant differences in the response patterns among districts were noted. In expectations for the school board role, at least, every school district is somewhat unique. It is hoped that additional analysis of the data will reveal underlying sociological economic or demographic variables which significantly influence the response patterns which have been noted.